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group consisting of:

- (i) said cellulose acetate compound has carboxyl groups wherein at least part of the carboxyl groups are free carboxyl groups;
- (ii) said cellulose acetate compound contains at least one member selected from the group consisting of an acid having an acid dissociation exponent pKa of 1.93 to 4.50 in water, an alkali metal salt of said acid, and an alkaline earth metal salt of said acid [to generate free carboxyl groups]; and
- (iii) said cellulose acetate compound contains an alkali metal or an alkaline earth metal, wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is  $5.5 \times 10^{-6}$  equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent, [to generate free carboxyl groups,]

wherein said cellulose acetate compound is soluble in an organic solvent and has a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0.

2. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (iii), wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is  $2.5 \times 10^{-6}$  equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent.

3. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 2,

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wherein the total content of the alkali metal and the alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is  $1 \times 10^{-6}$  equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent.

4. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (ii), wherein the acid has a pKa value of 2.0 to 4.4.

5. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (ii), wherein the acid is at least one organic acid selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic monocarboxylic acid, an aliphatic polycarboxylic acid, a hydroxycarboxylic acid, and an amino acid.

6. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 5, wherein the acid is at least one organic acid selected from the group consisting of a saturated or unsaturated C<sub>1-3</sub> monocarboxylic acid, a saturated or unsaturated C<sub>2-4</sub> dicarboxylic acid, a C<sub>1-6</sub> hydroxycarboxylic acid, and an amino acid.

7. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 6, wherein the acid is at least one member selected from the group consisting of formic acid, haloacetic acid, halopropionic acid, acrylic acid, malonic acid, succinic acid, glutaric acid, fumaric acid, glycolic acid, lactic acid, malic acid,

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tartaric acid, and citric acid.

8. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1 having at least feature (ii), wherein the total content of the acid, the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is  $1 \times 10^{-9}$  to  $3 \times 10^{-5}$  mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose acetate.

9. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 8, wherein the total content of the acid, the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is  $1 \times 10^{-8}$  to  $2 \times 10^{-5}$  mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose acetate.

10. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 9, wherein the total content of the acid, the alkali metal salt of the acid, and the alkaline earth metal salt of the acid is  $1 \times 10^{-7}$  to  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  mole relative to 1 gram of the cellulose acetate.

11. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate composition comprising the cellulose acetate compound of [according to] Claim 1 }, wherein the cellulose acetate is] in the form of a slurry, [and] wherein the slurry has a pH of 4.5 to 5.5.

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12. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate composition according to Claim 11, wherein the [cellulose acetate is in the form of a] slurry [having] has a pH of 4.8 to 6.0.

13. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1, wherein the average degree of acetylation is from 43.7 to 62.5%.

15. (twice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1, wherein the cellulose as a raw material is at least one member selected from the group consisting of a wood pulp and a linter pulp.

16. (thrice amended) A cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 15, wherein the cellulose as a raw material is at least one member selected from the group consisting of a hardwood pulp and a softwood pulp.

17. (thrice amended) A method of producing a cellulose acetate compound claimed in Claim 1, which comprises:

(i) mixing a cellulose acetate, and an acid having an acid dissociation exponent pKa of 1.93 to 4.50 in water or the metal salt thereof, to give a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0;

(ii) treating a cellulose acetate with said acid or said metal salt thereof to give a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0; or

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(iii) adding an alkali metal salt of said acid or an alkaline earth metal salt of said acid to a cellulose acetate, such that the total content of said alkali metal and said alkaline earth metal in 1 gram of the cellulose acetate is  $5.5 \times 10^{-6}$  equivalent or less in terms of ion equivalent, to give a slurry pH of 4.5 to 6.0.

22. (amended) A method of producing a cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 17, which comprises treating a cellulose with acetic acid, acetylating with acetic anhydride in the presence of a sulfuric acid catalyst to produce a cellulose triacetate, and hydrolyzing or aging the cellulose triacetate using sulfuric acid as a catalyst.

18. (amended) A dope containing the cellulose acetate compound according to Claim 1.

19. *CANCELED.*

20. (twice amended) A method for improving the releasability of a film from a support which comprises casting the dope of Claim 18 [or 19] on the support.

21. *CANCELED.*